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AUTHOR Hoke, Gordon
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ABSTRACT

This position paper on the concept of an international high school is primarily concerned with two questions: (1) What constitutes a "region"? (2) What are the ingredients of a "center"? Demographic changes and declining resources are serious obstacles confronting efforts to create new institutions, and logistical demands are underrated by proponents of the international high school. Thus attempts to provide different forms of secondary education for adolescents will require involvement of parents and other residents. Perhaps an updated version of the Danish Folk School, making extensive use of instructional technology and telecommunications, is one image of future prospects, but the impact of such a plan on organizational structures is not well understood and deserves separate study. The paper concludes that debates regarding the education of children and youth are in reality debates about priorities and realities of the adult world. (TE)

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SOME ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES CONFRONTING ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL: A WORKING PAPER

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Prepared by Gordon Hoke
Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation (CIRCE)

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Introduction

Development of this paper was guided by a position statement entitled "The International High School: A Model Proposed by the University of Illinois in Cooperation with the Illinois State Board of Education and CEMREL, Incorporated."[1] The author's years of experience in and with Illinois public schools also influenced remarks to follow. This state presents countless barriers to implementation of new programs and institutions amidst its myriad (over 1000) school districts and the nation's largest number of single-purpose taxing bodies.

Two questions of particular salience for Illinois, as well as other states, are

1. What constitutes a "region"?
2. What are the ingredients of a "center"?

Centers of Excellence

The President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies was attracted to the concept of a regional form of "magnet school." Numerous plans for desegregation have featured the same principle and thus far reports on the viability of magnet institutions are mixed. Furthermore, as noted in the discussion paper cited earlier, the report prepared by the Presidential

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[1] It has since appeared in essentially the same form in Foreign Language ANNALS, May 1980, pp. 183-188.

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Commission did not address the need for curriculum changes both before and after high school. (p. 2) If the international high school is to function as a pacesetter for American education in the decades ahead, it should become a "center of excellence," possessing both superior programs and a working knowledge of the requirements for educational change. At least three responsibilities could become integral parts of the proposed center.

1. A demonstration function
2. A technical assistance role
3. A "look-out" capability

Demonstration

Over a decade ago, House and associates[2] saw gifted demonstration centers in Illinois as wanting.

> . . . We will contend that demonstration centers are of limited effectiveness in disseminating innovations because of 1) certain policies adopted by the Illinois Plan; 2) lack of proper implementation of other policies by the demonstration center personnel; and 3) the deficiencies of the Research and Development model of change.

This author shares the viewpoints expressed above, particularly comments regarding implementation: the gap between policy and implementation is formidable.[3] In closing pages of the 1970 report, House asserted that effectiveness of the demonstration centers could be greatly improved by a reorganization along the following lines.

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[2]Ernest R. House, Thomas Kerins, and Joe M. Steele. The Demonstration Center: An Appraisal of the Illinois Experience, CIRCE, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1970, p. 5.

[3]E. F. Schumacher's critique seems pertinent: "It is not enough merely to have a new policy: new methods of organization are required, because *the policy is in the implementation.* (his italics) Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered (New York: Blond and Briggs, Ltd., 1974), p. 188.

First, a new institution was visualized: the "Area Service Center" (ASC).[4] One of its chief characteristics included location "within a variety of public agencies, such as the offices of a county superintendent, universities, or school districts."

The model discussion paper suggests that a rural version of an international high school "could capitalize on the Area Vocational Center or on a central Community College as a site for common experience." (p. 12) But the concept of a center must confront the realities of linkage demands--i.e., how do other institutions and agencies establish mechanisms--or generate capacity--for utilizing the center's resources? The ASCs urged by House and associates were implemented, although not in the comprehensive fashion they recommended, and have received criticism for an allegedly narrow focus on certain forms of inservice training.

Second, the House team saw the ASC as rendering on-site technical assistance to classroom instructors in their local settings.[5] Conversely, the discussion paper gives a higher priority to students and teachers who would participate in programs offered at the school or center: "One- or two-year intensive programs (Foreign Language) in which the course could meet three-hours per day, five days a week at the school." (p. 12) A teacher-exchange option also was cited in the 1970 document. This observer regards that feature as a valuable component of the international high school after it has been in place over time. No references to teacher exchanges appear in the discussion paper although some of its most important statements pertain to instructors and the need for quality teaching. (p. 11)

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[4]House, et al., Op. Cit., p. 38.

[5]Ibid., p. 41.

Technical Assistance

Donald Schön underscored the importance of technical assistance in a recent assessment of the limitations of curriculum reform.[6] He advocated creation of centers that could provide knowledgeable back-up support to local schools.

> Curriculum design, adaptation, and implementation need to be distinguished from one another and weighed in relation to each other. Models for the organization of curriculum design may not be appropriate for the other two, and the balance of effort may have been inappropriately weighted toward design. What would it be like to make implementation or adaptation central to the enterprise? *How might a central institution take on the role of providing the framework, tools, means of assessment, and resources to local schools so that they can become more competent at adaptation or implementation and indeed at design?* (p. 31)

In the same publication, Schön presented a series of judgments that hold singular importance for advocates of an international high school.

> . . . Teachers and educational administrators have tended to resent the intrusions of the curriculum reformers. *With some justice, they have perceived the reformers as arrogant and inattentive to the real world of the school, with its day-to-day constraints and travails.* (p. 29)
>
> Educators are increasingly disposed to believe that new curricula alone will not do the trick. *They worry about adapting curricula to different regional and local situations.* . . . (pp. 29-30)
>
> There is also reaction against . . . the pretensions of the sophisticated reformers, distant from our own situations and concerns, *who claim to know better than we do what is good for our children.* . . . (p. 30)
>
> The curriculum reform movement originated at a particular moment in our national history. . . . (p. 30)
>
> *Whatever else it may have done, the curriculum reform movement called attention to the problem of locus of responsibility for educational renewal.* . . . (p. 31)

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[6] "Whatever Happened to Curriculum Reform?" The National Elementary Principal, V. 56, No. 1 (Sept./Oct., 1976), pp. 28-31. (All italics added.)

> Localism and anti-intellectualism are not identical, although they have tended to be conjoined. *What are the models of educational research and renewal that would permit initiative, self-respect, and self-control for those who perceive themselves as 'local'?* (p. 31)

While the discussion paper acknowledges "the vested interests of the secondary school" (p. 5), in the author's opinion such interests move considerably beyond the brief treatment given them. Existing schools, in common with other societal institutions, face grave challenges from demographic changes and declining resources. In many states, including Illinois, support for public education is tied to average daily attendance (ADA). Moreover, marching bands and varsity athletics, for example, are highly valued in both urban and rural settings; new ventures that threaten continuation of community-oriented activities are almost certain to encounter strong resistance. One of the weakest elements of the discussion paper is its failure to explore in depth the likelihood of part-time attendance and/or the use of Saturdays, summer seminars, etc., if the international high school is to affect large numbers of students. In rural sectors, relatively high transportation costs will compound this situation. And neither urban nor rural systems have coped, on a broad scale, with unique problems posed by the incorporation of part-time students and programs as basic elements of the institution. In fact, the international high school may emerge in several places as a type of "dual enrollment" program as contrasted with the unitary structure implied by its title. Given the need to integrate significant cross-cultural experiences with academic classes, it becomes evident that pupil scheduling will necessitate much thought.

A "Look-Out" Institution

The magnitude of demographic shifts revealed in the 1980 Census data suggests that a "systems-break" is occurring in the United States. Peter Drucker anticipated these findings in a book appropriately entitled The Unseen

Revolution and submitted they were comparable in power and scope to the Industrial Revolution and the rise of Communism.[7]

It is apparent that population changes are interacting with the emergence of new value-orientations, particularly among American youth. On a very minor note, declining numbers of young males are combining with desires for part-time jobs and income to present grave challenges to traditional forms of varsity athletics in the high schools. But the fundamental issues rise far above this relatively mundane level.

> . . . The true nature of the ethical problem has dimensions that go beyond these considerations about source of authority. For even if it is stressed that the authority behind such decisions is entirely legitimate, one needs to face the problem that such choices are made with reference to a current value system and that current values need not, of necessity, remain valid in anticipated future situations. And this, despite the fact that they may represent a widely shared, generalized preference.
>
> Thus, the ethical problem goes deeper than the simple ability to define one particular outcome--that is, one particular future--as being more consonant, than another outcome or future, with a generalized current preference. The strong tendency of the present age is to assume that such consonance has legitimizing characteristics, at least for appearing congenial with democratic processes.[8]

Two aspects of the condition outlined above appear in the discussion paper. One refers to a generalized awareness: ". . . Some of those who had thought the fruits of their labor to be wholly domestic have, like the farmer, come to realize that they are part of an international complex." (p. 2) The second concerns students and "The Role of Experience." (p. 7) High schools in the "mainstream" of education in the USA have given short shrift to experiential learning; much the same picture has been true in colleges and universities.

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[7]The Unseen Revolution: How Pension-Fund Socialism Came to America, (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

[8]Hasan Ozbekan, "The Idea of a 'Look-Out' Institution," System Development Corporation, Santa Monica, California, April 1967, pp. 11-14.

Today this resistance seems to be softening, but the cautions Robin Williams raised a quarter-century ago should not be forgotten.[9]

> 'Contact brings friendliness.' This is the extreme and unqualified phrasing of a general assumption manifest in a great many current activities. . . . At this point we need only note that there is evidence that some kinds of contact sometimes are followed by increased mutual understanding and friendliness, and that the reverse is also true. . . .
>
> The great amount of effort currently devoted to arranging special occasions for intergroup association would hardly be expended except for the assumptions that (a) the experience changes behavior, and (b) there is a transfer of the changed behavior to other, more usual, types of situations. . . . Analogies from transfer-of-learning studies concerned with skills and academic subjects are not very helpful in evaluating such a belief, for the social and emotional contexts are radically different.

The "monitoring" function embraced by a look-out institution suggests that the international high school, whatever form it assumes, could offer key learning experiences for adults of the area. If a wiser understanding of world events and transactions is an esteemed goal for participating adolescents, it is difficult to comprehend how this outcome can be achieved without some involvement of parents and older residents. Perhaps the international high school should be construed as an updated version of the Danish Folk School, making extensive use of instructional technology and telecommunications. The impact of such a plan on organizational structures is not well understood and is deserving of a separate study.

Summary

It may be crucial to think of the proposed international high school as a new type of institution capable of fulfilling several roles. True, a design of this mode jeopardizes the school's primary function as an educator of youth.

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[9] The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions: A Survey of Research on Problems of Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Group Relations, Social Science Research Council, New York, Bulletin 57, 1947, pp. 15-16.

The author, though, believes a new institution must also assume new responsibilities and operate in a more sophisticated, knowledgeable fashion than heretofore found in the realm of "change-agentry," because it will have to be responsive to local, national, and international concerns whether they are explicit or futuristic. Tasks facing international schools in this domain are likely to be among the most difficult they will face. Schon's earlier statements concerning governance, trust, acceptability, and the like, are reinforced by contemporary skepticism about the federal government's ability to accomplish worthwhile goals.

An "experimental network" of international schools or programs, perhaps located mainly on university campuses, may be needed as a comprehensive research and development hub for their counterparts operating in other locales and marked by a variety of operational formats. The most desirable placement of the latter may rest in some configuration of intermediate districts--e.g., BOCES' of New York, IUs of Pennsylvania, CESAs of Wisconsin, IEDs of Oregon. Administrative expenses would be lowered, questions surrounding the definition of a region or area would be automatically resolved, and identification with a familiar agency would accrue to the new arrival. Also, most intermediate districts are supported by the common school fund whereas community colleges are normally financed by some phase of higher education. However, in those states where intermediate districts do not exist, or are in their embryonic stages--such as Illinois--institutions representing both private and public higher education may symbolize a sound alternative.

In any case, interaction between and among the various "models" will require careful monitoring.

Finally, those of us who view international high schools as a means for enhancing the quality of American life would do well to ponder the remarks of

a Canadian sociologist.[10]

> The debate about education is directly a debate about priorities and realities in adult life. It is also a debate whose alternative solutions affect the scope and constraint we give to children.
>
> . . .
>
> Youth now symbolizes the contradictions generated by our values and practices.
>
> . . .
>
> . . . The process of industrialization is generating certain common conditions of life that are dissolving the previous contradictions in moral and ideological commitments, while at the same time they are reducing the opportunity for legitimate intensity. In the West, this process tends to leave youth in an isolated position.

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[10]Kaspar Naegle, "Youth and Society: Some Observations," in Erik H. Erikson, ed., The Challenge of Youth, (New York: Anchor Books edition, 1965, pp. 52-53.

Possible Discussion Questions

1. Is the concept of an International High School an "institutional" or a "programmatic" idea? Both?

2. Should it be charged with responsibility for acting as a "change agent"?

3. If International High Schools are implemented, will they become embedded in the domain of inter-governmental relations--that is, possessing federal, state, regional, and local ties?

4. How can significant forms of extramural learning be provided in those settings marked by homogeneous populations and a scarcity of economic, political, and social agencies and organizations?

5. Will the establishment of International High Schools evoke new forms of university cooperation with communities and their social institutions?